

How everest lewin
presents conflicting
emotions in "sonnet"



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In "Sonnet," Lewin uses the traditionally romantic sonnet form in aptly named poem Sonnet to explore a speaker's conflicted feelings for his beloved. The poem might be read as a devoted deceleration of the speaker's love for the addressee, and yet upon further analysis it seems that the emotions of the speaker are riddled with both contradiction and doubt.

In Sonnet, Lewin presents a speaker evidently besotted with his beloved, proven by the extensive focus on the woman throughout the poem. Such is immediately demonstrated by the sonnet form in which the poem is written: as a form traditionally aligned with romantic passions, the form immediately alludes to the speaker's deep feelings of admiration for the addressee. The personal pronoun 'You' pervades the majority of the poem's lines, which creates a sense of a love so deep that it overpowers all other elements of the speaker's life. Indeed, the pronoun starts four of the six lines in the poem's sestet, perhaps suggesting that all significant factors of the speaker's life begin with consideration of his partner. The poet claims that the location in which 'I met you and I loved you, is forgot.' and the non-standard standard syntax employed here suggests that the love shared by the pair is unique and unconventional in its incredible intensity. Highlighting this is the caesura which places focus on the closing 'is forgot', forwarding the idea that the poet's love is able to transcend memories of space and location, with the intertwined 'you' and 'I' personal pronouns implying that the poet is bound up in his love for the addressee.

Such is further demonstrated in the following line which claims 'There seems to me no time when you were not'. Here, the speaker's love is shown so powerful as to transcend not only place, but also time. The regular iambic
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pentameter employed here- and indeed throughout the course of the poem- echoes the rhythm of the human heartbeat, and therefore suggests that the speaker's love is able to have profound effect on both his physical and mental wellbeing. The speaker's emotions are again proven all-immersive in the notion that 'no road' separates him from the woman, and that there is 'no cup' that she may not share. Here, the Lewin alludes to both the external location of 'roads' and internal location of the body through the action of drinking from a cup, and therefore suggests that there is no escape from his feelings for his lover as she is present in both his external and internal world. Alternatively, the detail of a 'cup' might imply that- like water- the love is not only enjoyable for the speaker but additionally a necessary component to his survival.

Nonetheless, the speaker's emotions for his lover are not entirely celebratory, and seem claustrophobic and at times damaging. Highlighting this is the volta of the poem, which distinguishes the speaker's feelings of love to his feelings of grievance concerning the lover. A catalogue of similes is employed in the sestet comparing the lover to unsavoury objects such as a 'thorn', 'leaven' or 'tangle', suggesting that the poet's love has become more of a source of hinderance than happiness. The alliterated 't' in the simile likening the addressee to a 'tameless tangle of my lot' suggests that the speaker feels burdened by his lover's presence yet is unable to rid himself of it. Enjambments are used throughout the verse in order to create a frequent effect of slippage, suggesting that the speaker lacks control and certainty over the power of his love. A compelling example of this is the enjambment linking the lines 'no house wherein I sleep/ That is not empty',

which holds implications that the speaker feels intruded upon by his lover and is unable to undergo human necessities such as sleep without disruption. Despite the incessant use of personal pronoun 'You' throughout the poem, it is interesting that the line 'From the cold wind: no house wherein I sleep' is absent of the pronoun, suggesting that the only thing certain to the speaker is a 'cold wind'- or an empty soulless mental state- when his lover is absent. It becomes clear that the speaker feels that he is unable to flourish or develop as an individual due to the overwhelming love between himself and his lover.

Additionally, the repeated use of personal pronoun 'You' might position blame on his partner for his suffering and depressive state. Levin uses the declarative 'Though I have loved you, loathed you', and the alliterated 'I' paired with the use of caesura almost blends the central verbs 'loved' and 'loathed', suggesting that the speaker finds difficulty in distinguishing between the two emotions. Indeed, whilst the central description of the verse rests on the poet's love for his partner, much is written in the form of negatives through the repeated lexical choice 'No'. This dramatises the internal conflict of the speaker who feels that he must struggle between overwhelming love and overwhelming fear of his feelings. Such a notion reaches fruition in the deliberately ambiguous finale: 'There seems to me no joy where you are not.', with the dual use of pejorative lexis 'Not' undermining the central message of love's capacity for great happiness, suggesting that the speaker feels ultimately trapped in his perception of how love should be compared to the harsh reality of how it is. Indeed, Levin departs from the traditions of the sonnet form through refusing to rhyme his

final couplet, suggesting a fractured and disharmonious relationship that is anything but unified. The first line of the couplet reads ' what is blame of praise?', and the use of rhetorical question, implying that the speaker's inabilities to distinguish the two concepts are so intense that he must appeal to a silent audience for advice. ' You and condemned you' is an accusation employed by the poet to suggest that the lover has not only damned the speaker, but additionally herself, as neither her nor the speaker will be able to ever wholly break from the confinements of their relationship.

Lewin's Sonnet reads as a testament to love's capacity for pain, joy and fear. Whilst able to produce arguably equal amounts of negativity and positivity, it is clear that love is unparalleled in its incredible intensity able to overwhelm all aspects of the lives of those able to experience it.